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Coraddi  
winter issue  
1974



# Coraddi

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## LULLABYE

Arlene Katz

Strawberry eater, I have a lullabye for you  
Out of the morning of despair, the evening of desperation,  
Comes a new sky every time, a new meaning.

The coins roll with cycles  
Time rockets down with roller-coasters,  
Strangers wander through the carnival.  
Comets pass overhead, no one sees  
Rain obscures night prophecies:  
The new pattern, the new promise.

Someone whispers about bell jars  
How they descend, then they rise.  
Carousels whirl, sometimes you are dizzy  
Sometimes the gold ring; a new chance, a new story.

The past drags dead bodies behind you  
Rattling dry as bones.  
My mother told me: "Laugh in the morning  
You will cry before the day has ended."  
Every new turning, every new promise  
Every new journey, an abyss in the darkness.

## CHRISTOPHER AND THE THREE ROADS

Arlene Katz

If you turn to the right  
You will find a path that leads toward the magician's tower  
All night he stands beneath the moon  
and whispers.

Left and you go north and to the sea  
There are mermaids  
And shells that speak.

The center road leads to the forest.  
We do not go to the forest. The magician has no teeth  
He has a hundred cats that shriek and caper  
along the stairway. He feeds us  
chocolate and we never sleep.  
We stand upon the tower all night.

By the sea we find bleached bones  
and gold from ships. Shark's  
teeth and jaws of whales.  
Ladies sing and crabs jerk crookedly up and down the beach  
The waves spill water at our feet.

We do not go to the forest  
Although at daybreak you can hear the larks  
And the noise of brooks and twigs snapping.  
Things move around.  
Magician spells and tales of shells  
Spin rainbows and make us dance,  
We would not take the chance  
To go inside the forest with its soundless sound  
with its darkest dark.

## POEM IN LATE OCTOBER

Arlene Katz

It is Autumn.

I sit at the top of the stairway looking down.

No one speaks.

All night I listen as the crickets slowly freeze  
to silence. Rain strips the orchard.

Dark comes early and it drizzles from breakfast  
Until dinner.

Today I received a letter from you.

"Come home,

The city slides toward winter.

Fire engines rattle the window panes.

We drink wine and watch the lights uptown.

Come home.

Francine has married and Laura has gone to Italy.

Come home.

We met your father in the supermarket buying peaches,

He told us he still hasn't heard from you.

Everyone asks when you will

Come home."

Outside my window the moon dissolves into passing clouds."

Fog circles spectrums round the apple trees

Gnarled as hunchbacks.

## TO HERB AND OTHER INMATES

Tom Kerr

at 5:30 sharp (as the pain in an ear hammered out of sleep  
by a prison bell)  
the bars look like stripes  
of a night so lightless  
that you feel its weight like the burden on the brain  
waiting for time to overtake the nightmares that haunt  
each anxious  
cell.  
one morning closer to your past,  
(that waits like a refugee center for you to claim your rationed present)  
“WHY’d” awake  
you answer  
as the guard calls your role.

## AUTUMN

Tom Kerr

the trees are leaving  
themselves all over the ground,  
the squirrels are going  
nuts  
packing trunks,  
the snowclouds sag drowsily  
waiting to flake-out  
like a polar bear in the white quiet of winter.

## SODA SHOP PARKING LOT

Tom Kerr

the dry-cleaned american  
golden ruler  
sweetening his after-sunday-schoolers  
with "do-unto-your-little-brother-a-lick-of-yours" sundaes,  
... all push-buttoned up in their mother's-pie-warm,  
anti-pollutant ecological  
technological energy-eater

he push-unbuttons the window the width  
of a motel room door chain;  
opens a prayer-wrung hand and drop-plops  
(preying on my passerbying-knee, then to the concrete-coffined  
mother earth)  
a "kerplunkthud" plastic  
cola-holder.





# Agape'

SALLY VAN NOPPEN

There had been no birth announcement sent them in the mail. Instead, Joe had telephoned them one evening after work to crow that he had a seven-pound son and wasn't that great? Great? Peter shook his head to Susan. Great? Susan shook her head to Peter. What was great about it? One of them thought about a baby suffering through life with a tyrannical mother; the other considered the aspects of a child raised by a completely insane father.

Susan and Peter had justification, to reflect as they did. They had witnessed the interim just before Marjorie's pregnancy when Joe was banished from her presence. They all thought, then, that the estranged condition was permanent. Each was wrong. Each for a different reason.

Coming to them back then had been a completely natural thing for Joe to do, Peter said. Susan felt it was more an accident of nature. They never did agree about it, but looking back Susan decided she did not blame Joe, exactly.

She could recollect his form today, gangling there at the door on the Friday of Labor Day weekend. With his boxy brown suitcase in one hand, and with his wicker clothes

hamper tucked under the other arm, he had rung the bell, standing when she saw him between her and the hot, pure light of an August afternoon. She would have turned him away except he appeared so dazed by what had happened to him. Had he been run down by a speeding Greyhound bus he could not have been more bewildered. As she let him in he smiled a long, slow, sad smile that said, "I'm sad. Will you be my friend?" Like puppies in the ASPCA ads. What he did say was only a trifle less overt.

"Hi, Susan. What's going on here? Listen, I hate to bust in on you like this, but if you and old Pete wouldn't mind I sure would like to stay here a couple of days." Already he was into the hall, clunking his belongings down clumsily on the tile floor.

"Peter?" In panicked anxiety she sought her husband.

"Hey, man, what's happening?" Joe reached Peter before she did, and while they were still shaking hands Joe told Peter the circumstances of Marjorie's sending him out of the house. His relating of the story was as dramatic as if he were telling Peter how to change a flat tire. Peering around Joe, Susan vaguely frowned at her husband. He ignored her either by accident or by intention, she had never been sure which. She did hear distinctly the fatal words of invitation which Peter offered.

"As long as you want, buddy. Sorry about all this. Surely the woman will come to her senses soon. I wouldn't worry about it though. Give her a chance to cool off for a while and then try to talk with her. That's what I'd do."

Joe moved in with them at that instant, establishing himself with what seemed to Susan an astounding kind of ease. She first looked forward to having him eat breakfast with her. Peter's breakfast consisted only of juice, so for the two years of their marriage she prepared eggs and bacon only if they had guests. It would be fun to have someone to eat with her. The first morning's meal killed her desire to eat breakfast with him, or with anyone, for a very long time. Joe bounced to his place at the table smelling like a men's toiletry shop. He must have had on pre-shave, after-shave, hair tonic, cologne, and she did not have the strength to guess what else. The heavy, sweet odor made her queasy. She

could not eat one mouthful. Joe ate ravenously, undaunted. When he noticed that she was not eating he asked if she minded his having her food too.

"No sense in wasting good home cooking," he chuckled, extending his fork to her plate.

She resolved to fix no more breakfasts. He could prepare his own.

For Susan the afternoons were even worse than the mornings. Then the sight rather than the smell of Joe overwhelmed her. He had a key to the house, given him by the sympathetic Peter, so he came in at will. The back door would open, she would hear it and rise to meet her husband coming home from his work. Inevitably when she turned the corner, smiling a greeting for Peter, there would stand Joe. Peter would arrive eventually, but for those minutes it was only Joe, hulking, haunting. His thinness made him seem to dangle in space. He was more than six feet tall, with limbs so long and skinny that she had to check herself to remember he was a real person, not a marionette. Almost, it was a quirk that he was not a wooden puppet. His movements repeatedly reinforced her impression. He did not walk with the usual stride of a man, but rather with each step he bent his leg at the knee, kicking his foot forward before it came to rest again. His plainness startled her again and again. Looking at him was a chore. It was as though Ichabod Crane had blundered into her life, intending to stay forever. Unlike Ichabod, Joe had a cowlick on his forehead, at the fuller side of the part in his hair; and at the crown of his head the hair was unruly so that it stood up with a question. The legs, the hair, combined to make him unearthly, but even more, the wooden color of his skin chilled and annoyed her. It should not have, but there it was. Always. Of course the only places his skin showed were at the neck and face and hands. And at the ears. His ears were gigantic, like the rest of him. She would have sworn they were uneven so that the right one was attached to his head slightly higher than the left. Pasty colored, they were. Anemic seashells.

It was weird having him there in their house. Weird and funny and sad and maddening all at the same time. Things had begun with him in a sad way, really. They had been close. He and Peter had played partners in tournament bridge for six or seven years. Oddly, he was a fine bridge player. They liked him, or Susan *had* liked him, even though Peter agreed with her that he was awfully peculiar. To accept the fellow, she felt, one must be a little odd oneself. Joe was so much an enigma, or at least mysterious. Maybe he wasn't stupid; maybe he actually understood the cynical things she began to say to him after he had been with them long enough to really bother her. If what she said, and what she did, had an effect of any sort on him she never knew it.

She and Peter didn't know there had been any hint of trouble in Joe and Marjorie's marriage. It did seem as though Marjorie must be a bit wacky to have married him, but more mysterious things have happened. Susan thought briefly of the Loch Ness monster. Then, Marjorie had a double chin, and was no great beauty. Since she was thirty-three or four when they married, older than Joe by two years, there was some sense to it all. Maybe she had been desperate. Still, they didn't know there was trouble. Joe didn't know it either. All Marjorie would tell him in asking him to leave, he said, was that there was a "lack of communication" in their marriage. He told Peter he just couldn't figure it out. Who could understand those things, anyway? A wife kicks a husband out with his suitcase and wicker clothes hamper and says, "Go away. We don't 'communicate.'" She and Peter thought it was a whim of Marjorie's. Peter, in his dry way, remarked to Joe one night as they all sat watching a television show that perhaps Marjorie's action was prompted by a change in her "lunar mood." Susan giggled.

"Huh?" Joe had jerked his body upright in the chair. "Lunar mood? What's that? I don't think Marjorie believes in that astrology stuff."

That suggestion passed away. After a week of being with them Joe decided he was ready to try for reconciliation. Peter encouraged him, for what Susan thought were meant

to be noble reasons. She encouraged it because she wanted him gone. Joe kept telephoning Marjorie from their house. She inevitably hung up on him. The routine began there. Gently Joe would replace the telephone receiver, sighing. Taking some coins out of his pocket he would leave them beside the kitchen sink. Then, legs flailing, he would hurry back to his chair, as though he wanted to pretend his effort had never been made. When Peter mentioned the money, Joe explained that it was long-distance to call her and he felt as though he should pay. Where rent was concerned he felt the same way. Insisting that he could not stay with them if he did not pay some amount, Joe made Peter agree to allow it. Besides, Peter kept telling her, Joe would make a decision of some sort as soon as the shock wore off. They were helping him by offering shelter for a time. Peter repeatedly emphasized that.

At night after they went to bed Susan would talk about it to Peter. It was the only time they had alone. Once, in the second week, she suggested they visit Marjorie and tell her how much at loose-ends Joe was. Surely she would take him back. Peter said no. That would be hypocritical of them because they both disliked her for her pointed nose and her double chin and her attitude with Joe. She had an annoying manner because she manipulated Joe, Peter claimed. He grimly reminded her of the times he had seen her at bridge tournaments when she treated Joe like a lackey, asking him to fetch her purse or to bring her coffee. They didn't like her at all. It seemed stupid to Susan that he would want to get back to her, but that was not primary. What was important was when, not why, he could go home.

Increasingly Susan understood why Marjorie had renounced Joe. One incident involved the clothes hamper, but there were others. She did his laundry as a matter of course. Anyone would do as much for a house guest, especially if he were a paying guest. On Thursdays she went in to collect the dirty clothes. There would be his tidy room with

the bed made and smooth, on the dresser stood his bottles of shaving lotion and the comb that must be chagrined to fight with the cowlick and the question-mark hair; by the closet door in neat order were the casual suede oxfords Joe wore on weekends and his red plastic bedroom shoes with the black plastic soles; and in the corner next to the perpetually empty waste can rested his wicker clothes hamper. The first week's laundry did not puzzle her. There were not many clothes in the little hamper, but she did not know whether he sent most of his things out to the laundry or not. She did his wash and thought nothing more about it. On Thursday of the second week she returned to the neat room and found the same number of clothes, two sets of everything: two pairs of undershorts, faded to a dull white, two undershirts worn until the cotton cloth felt slick and fragile, four navy blue socks, each so chronically worn at the heel that the bare woven threads resembled window screening, two white cotton handkerchiefs, two shirts, and one pair of ugly striped pajamas. Since she had seen Joe take nothing like laundry out of the house nor bring any packages back with him, she was certain that could not be all. She even looked in the closet and under the bed. There was nothing, not even dust. So few clothes for so many days. She mentioned it to Peter.

He laughed. "Well, don't worry about it. Maybe he wears things more than once. Asking about it might embarrass Joe, so just be glad. It makes less work for you anyway, doesn't it?"

Even though she knew he was right it made her angry. The anger annoyed her. Her annoyance increased with the days passing, and finally Joe's striped pajamas drove her nearly insane. When Joe's stay had lengthened into at least three weeks he began to change from street clothes into pajamas about nine o'clock each evening. Every time it began in the same way. He would rise and face them.

"You don't mind if I slip into my pajamas now, do you?" He would stand, waiting expectantly, bouncing on his elastic knees. Weakly, Susan forced a nod. Peter would ignore it. Back would come Joe, dressed in his pajamas and the red plastic bedroom shoes

that gratingly swished when he walked. The absence of a bathrobe added to the preposterousness of his looks. Susan's stomach constricted at each reappearance of the gaudily striped outfit. Electric blue stripes and putrid green stripes alternated up and down his chest; blue and green stripes raced up and down his gangly arms; and blue and green, and blue and green, and blue and green rose from his pale, bare ankles dissolving below his ears. Trying not to look, she would attempt to turn away. They all sat still, frozen. She hated him.

Susan began to believe that a reconciliation with Marjorie was the only hope she had of his leaving. He did not want to be alone. Deciding she must do something about it she formulated a plan, attempting to share it with Peter. She would talk to Joe, subtly psychoanalyzing him, and carefully she would help him put some perspective on his marriage. When she had illustrated to him how he needed to act, Peter could assist by suggesting that Joe go out on his own, either to Marjorie or to a new place. It would work, she assured Peter of that, and then she waited to see if he would agree. He did not.

"Stay out of it, Susan. I'm telling you. Leave him alone. He will go when he is ready, and he will know when the time is. Don't you try to manipulate him too."

Ignoring Peter, she began her therapy anyway. The issue was clearly a question of survival, either hers or Joe's. She began the first installment that same afternoon before Peter got home.

"Joe, I want to talk to you. Did you and Marjorie ever fight with one another? It is important to fight, you know, if it is done in a constructive manner." Satisfied, she waited for his reply.

"Gosh, Susan, I guess so. Well, no, maybe not. I never started a fight with her. She didn't do anything I didn't like. When she started a fight or a discussion, she calls them discussions, I'd get nervous. You know? She always calls it a discussion."



"So, what did you do? How did you handle it? Did you leave, or try to reason with her? Try to change the subject? What did you do?" This was a good idea. She was progressing with Joe, proving Peter wrong.

"To tell the truth, I don't think I did anything."

"I know you must have done something. Even if it was just to sit and listen. What did you do? Think."

"Sometimes if I just didn't know what to do I asked her to play 'gin.'" He smiled widely, making his ears wiggle.

"'Gin?' What do you mean? Not gin rummy?"

"Yeah," he grinned again, "I guess you think that's kind of dumb."

Susan had squealed with laughter. "Joe, you can't be serious. In the middle of a fight you would ask Marjorie to play gin rummy? Didn't she just get furious with you when you asked her to play cards?"

"She sure did. Every time. The only reason I did it was to try to avoid trouble."

"Did you explain that to her?"

"No, I never did. It wouldn't have done any good. Usually by that time she'd be crying anyway."

It gave Susan shivers to think of that horrendous double chin quaking with sobs. Joe continued.

"I guess I should have tried to explain to her. My problem is that I just don't know much about women. I sure wish I did though." He exhaled until his shoulders drooped, like a balloon losing its air.

Susan left him with the assurance that he probably knew as much as any man did about women. She longed for it to be possible for her to tell Peter of the conversation. She didn't dare. Gin Rummy, indeed.

That evening, as usual, they watched television.

"Wonder why they took that guy out of 'Bonanza?' " Joe asked. "I always liked him."

"They wrote him out of the script," Susan tried to sound knowledgeable.

"Do you know why?" Joe boomed in his too-loud voice.

"Yeah, he was queer." She enjoyed the astonished looks both Joe and Peter gave her.

"Susan," Peter's tone was subdued in warning.

"You're kidding. I didn't know they did things like that any more." Joe leaned toward her in earnest.

"Yes," she added, "homosexuality is very tabu in Hollywood right now."

Joe sank back in his chair to figure it all out, but Peter cut his eyes to her and frowned. When he looked as though he would speak she silenced him by putting a finger to her lips. Thoroughly miffed he walked out of the room, summoning her to follow. Back in their room he burst out his accusation.

"What do you think you're accomplishing by deviling the poor boy that way? Why in the world would you do such a cruel thing?" His frown masked all other expression.

"Peter, don't be mad. It didn't even touch him. You saw that. He wasn't insulted."

"Oh, just because he didn't call you a crazy idiot you think he didn't understand you being mean and small. He feels a lot more than he lets on. You should know that. You certainly see that."

"I think you're being somewhat dramatic, Peter. You must admit it was amusing. If I have to sit here with him night after night the least he can suffer me is a little amusement." At that she left him, assuming that perhaps for the first time Peter knew how frustrated she was by Joe's presence.

The situation remained unchanged, or got worse. In the fifth week Marjorie telephoned Joe. The call made him ecstatic until he learned that she had called to ask for

money to buy food for their cat. He began cursing at her, shouting and waving his bony arm in the air. Susan got up and left the den, secretly pleased. It was likely that what Marjorie wanted was for Joe to come home and give her a good, hard beating. She tried voicing that theory to Peter when he came to bed.

"I'm telling you again, Susan. Quit thinking about it, quit talking about it, and for God's sake quit trying to do anything about it. If you'll just leave him alone he will work things out by himself." Peter was as angry at her as Joe had been at Marjorie.

Joe's telephone encounter with Marjorie prompted him to take what Susan saw as a drastic measure. He went to his house, bringing back all the things he owned. In addition to several boxes of clothes, he collected an armchair, two tables, a portable television set, two electric clocks, a floor lamp, some blankets, a box of china dishes, and a framed photo of Marjorie, her head held high and sassy, obliterating the double chin. His paraphernalia filled the next room. Susan thankfully assumed he would retire from their den to his own television in the evenings. That would be some respite at least. To her dismay she was entirely wrong. Joe continued to join them each evening.

In desperation Susan tried a new tack. Whereas before she had changed Joe's bedsheets once a week at the same time she changed theirs, she left his unchanged. She also neglected his laundry until Peter, passing Joe's door and seeing clothes spilling from the top of the clothes hamper, pointed it out to her.

"Have you quit doing Joe's washing?"

"Yes, sir, I certainly have." She was so tired of all this.

"Why, Susan? Were I in his place wouldn't you want someone taking care of me?" His gentling was wasted on her.

"If you were in his place I don't suppose I'd care what happened to your laundry. Peter, that boy, man, child, whatever he is, is driving me out of my mind. He annoys me.

He frustrates me. I think I'd like to shoot him right between the eyes." With her thumb and forefinger she mimed the shooting motion, aiming at a spot on Peter's forehead.

"You're acting crazy. How can you be so uncharitable? When we got married I loved you for your dignity of spirit, what I thought was goodness. Now look at you. What is the matter?"

"Peter, I cannot explain it any better than I already have. I just know that having Joe here bothers me more every day. I am not able to tolerate him. Why can't you understand that? He's so stupid."

Several nights later Peter complained of a stomach ache.

"It's probably all that orange juice you've been drinking." Susan thought it served him right. She would make a gallon on Monday morning and by Wednesday it was gone.

"What?"

"All that citric acid. It's making your stomach hurt."

"Orange juice?" Peter was indignant, "the only juice I drink is what I have at breakfast. I thought you were drinking it all. I meant to ask you about it this morning because there was none. Haven't you been drinking it?"

"No." She felt smug.

"Joe must be drinking it then. He must be raiding the refrigerator at night. Has he been eating all the chesse too? There's never any cheese."

"I suppose so." Now Peter would have a change in attitude. Joe was eating all his food.

"Susan, you'd better start fixing more food at supper. He must not be getting enough to eat."

"What do you mean? He has a second helping of everything we have. He gets plenty to eat. He can *not* be hungry. I'll bet it's substitute gratification. Peter, he'd be so much happier with Marjorie. He needs to go home."

Peter, mumbling, turned off the light. She decided not to ask him what he had said, so she lay motionless beside him in the dark. They were back at the start again.

When she grocery-shopped at the beginning of the eighth week of Joe's stay, Susan purposely bought neither cheese nor orange juice. It meant no breakfast for Peter, but perhaps that would prod him into thinking about the situation. Even when she began serving smaller portions to Joe at mealtime, he continued to compliment her on whatever he received.

These compliments coupled with Joe's cheerful clearing of the table after supper aggravated Susan more than anything else he did. She wanted Peter to clear the table. He had always done it. It was his job. Now Joe did it for him, thoroughly and competently. He knew the best way to scrape the plates; he returned the butter and the coffee cream to the refrigerator without being reminded; he even emptied the ashtrays. His consummate handling of the entire process was as exasperating for her as if he had broken one dinner plate every single night he was there. Finally Susan could not restrain herself. One night Joe brought the empty plates into the kitchen, smilingly satisfied with his contribution to her leisure. She turned on him.

"Joe, I'd really rather you let Peter do that. He understands my manner in the kitchen. I feel more comfortable with him bringing in the dishes."

"Uh, sure, Susan. I was just trying to help you a little bit. Marjorie always liked for me to help with the dishes."

"I know, Joe, but I am not Marjorie. I want Peter to do that."

"Oh, yeah, I understand. Pete," his call bounced off the kitchen cabinets, "bring in those dishes, boy. Your wife has spoken."

The next tactic she used even embarrassed Susan. Each morning she found the newspaper and, even before reading it, marked the ROOMS FOR RENT section with a red pencil. Carefully she placed it on the edge of the bathtub, just across from the commode. If Peter announced his intention to go into the bathroom before Joe did she

would have to slip in and remove that section of the paper until it was Joe's turn. This lasted through the eleventh and twelfth weeks.

One afternoon at five o'clock the back door squeaked open. Susan ignored it, knowing it was Joe, returning from work. Peter walked in, scowling.

"What's the matter with you? You look as if you swallowed a lemon." She half way feared his answer.

"Joe is moving." He sat down opposite her, staring.

"Oh, why?" She knew the tone should be kept light. "You said he'd move when the time came didn't you?"

"I'm not sure why he's moving. He called me at work today to say he had found a room. He's going by there this afternoon to make a deposit." Susan watched him study her.

"When will he be moving?" Despite Peter's attitude she could hardly wait to know.

"This weekend. The place will be empty on Friday."

Peter helped Joe to move his belongings that Friday after work. When he came back from Joe's boarding house she thought about the key Peter had given Joe.

"Did you think to ask him for our key?"

"No, I mean yes. One of his lamps is still here. He said he'd return the key when he gets the lamp."

She nodded. There seemed to be nothing else to say. On Saturday she waited, knowing Joe would be back. He didn't come. Sunday passed and still he did not stop by. She went into his room and looked at the lamp. In the evening she suggested to Peter they go out for a movie. He had been distant to her all weekend and she thought a movie might cheer

him up: make him forget about blaming her for Joe's leaving.

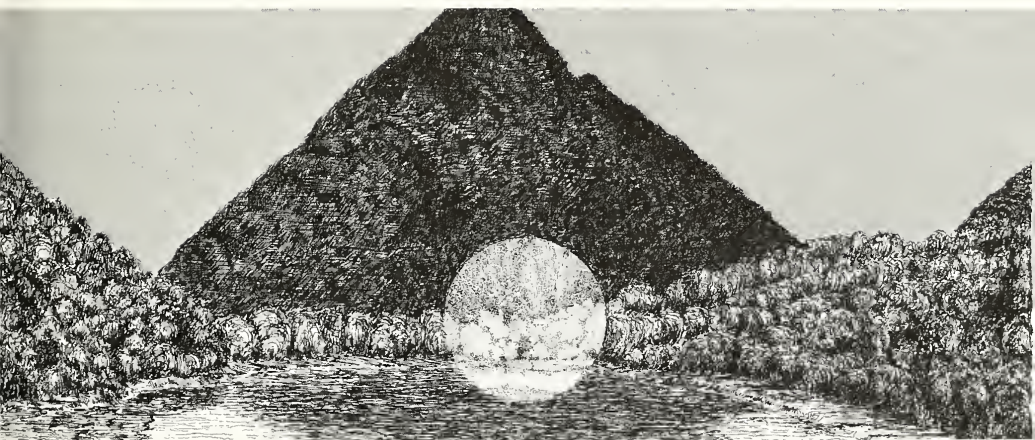
When they came home after the movie the front porch light was burning, casting watery black shadows across the front of the house. Susan was sure the light had been off when they left. Though she looked for Joe's car, it was not in sight. Somehow she thought he might be in the house. Leaving Peter outside she unlocked the door and went in, switching on lights, checking each room, even the closets. There was no doubt. Joe was gone.

## THE MOOR

Annaliese Witzky

Your mysterious alluring body,  
captures those men,  
who dare to tear your veils,  
or curse your form.  
Your moves are of lovers,  
stealing secretly into the night;  
you haunt those who don't confide in your power and  
strength,  
though you whisper gentleness to all lost souls—  
who seek to find their ways,  
nursing them, coddling them, with your mothering  
style  
Spreading your blanket of cool moist years  
of knowledge gained and powering age,  
for those who lay dormant in your challenging haze—  
yearning, seeking for another day .





## THE DRUID TREE

Marilynn Byerly

Dead and cut away  
Except for its trunk  
The Druid tree stands—  
Its two hacked limbs  
Outstretched in supplication  
To some long dead god  
Whose memory still  
Touches the darkness of man's mind.  
For a brief second in answer  
It becomes living oak  
Alive with mistletoe and dolls  
Sanctified to a god of fertility  
By blood-soaked furrows.  
The vision breaks to mist  
As a tractor rattles by  
And only a dead tree remains  
Which curses the new god.

LINDA, THE LIBERAL WEREWOLF  
( A COMPANION PIECE TO FRED THE VAMP)

Marilynn Byerly

Born when a liberal wolf  
Nibbled the neck of a free-love advocate  
Under a full moon and the stars of a chinese flag  
Linda spends her time prowling  
At "Legalize Everything" rallies  
Sniffing out conservatives  
To chew out their convictions  
And trying to forget the loneliness of her non-life.  
She throws her grief like a howl into the wind  
And dares not think of her right winged love  
Who flew into her heart  
And left his fang marks there.  
She fears to think  
How so alike they were,  
Linda and her darling Fred,  
Despite opposite positions  
For then she must remember  
How they sought the other's neck  
In a love embrace  
And found the other  
Bloodless.



## FOR MISS H

Marilynn Byerly

He proposed to me on a Ferris wheel  
When the world hurled madly about  
reflected in my eyes  
As he clasped my hand in entreaty,  
For he was younger than I—  
But I teach diagramming, rules of grammar,  
And major literary works  
To children too young to understand them  
And on empty nights write my own poetry  
About death  
Which 10th graders mistake for lost love.  
My collie Honey and I  
Roam about our old house  
Vacated long before by my father,  
My mother, my brother, my sister  
And tell visiting students  
How he proposed to me on a Ferris wheel.

AN EXERCISE IN THE LYRICISM  
OF THE CLASSIC COUNTRY SONG

Jill Gaster

I was your bride at seventeen  
For better or for worse  
But there ain't been no inbetween  
Our wedding was a curse  
My mamma said you was a creep  
And she was right, I see  
Love's one thing that sure ain't cheap  
But they gave your's out for free

CHORUS: Close cover before striking  
Honey, you ain't to my likin'  
And Darling, can't you see  
You're not the match for me

When you get in a drunken brawl  
I know there's been a fight

You know how it makes me bawl  
I cry and cry all night  
I can see you in my mind  
A-gulping down your beer  
Your football games won't help you find  
A way to dry my tears  
What's the use of appealing?  
Your abuse has me reeling  
I'm on my last leg, you broke my arm  
Lord, I've tried to forgive you  
I don't know why I live with you  
I'm not a slave anymore to your charms

Close cover before striking  
Honey, you ain't to my likin'  
And Darling, can't you see  
You're not the match for me

Very slowly, gently, and easily the door is opened  
and the house is entered.

A hushed sobbing is heard (a sigh of relief?)  
coming not from the pain of losing  
but from the joys of giving.

Lewdly and rhythmically the wares are taken  
and the occupant is drugged.

Accurately on schedule  
the senses begin to dull.

Touch is smooth and silky.

Focus is cloudy.

Nothing can be heard except occasional murmurs  
and the constant throb of drums.

After relinquishing the supplies  
very slowly, gently, and easily  
the door closes softly  
and the house is empty.

A hushed sobbing is heard.

A quick prayer uttered.

And the thief is forgiven of breaking and entering

Deb Carter



## THE MOON IS A PIMP

Jack Ridl

The moon's a pimp,  
Standing with a smirk  
And a promise;

A floating wink,  
Leaning in his own light,  
Who unlocks the door

Then disappears  
As you stand  
Naked in the sun.

## BIOGRAPHICS OF BOY

Larry Beebe

9

bruised fingers

chew tobacco

baseball and ping-pong at the college—

“don’t need no boyscouts” (to a meddling old bitch)

job picking up trash at the hamburger place

saving up for a shotgun

dad farms

indian

don’t know what he wants to be

don’t like school

aint got no girlfriend

never heard of kit carson

## SISTER

Ruth Anne Seabolt

Sarah,  
In the dawn made yellow by our room,  
I see your soft-black hair, your face  
Working and molding itself,  
The dreams that pour out of  
Your ears and nose;  
You cried last night in your sleep,  
But without tears.  
Your face wrestles with itself until  
Your eyes jerk open, blurry and wild.  
They stare at a sample of your  
Eighth-grade art— a wind ensemble  
Done in ink and water color  
The central figure has the moon  
For a head, a blue leg, a green leg,



An orange body; his nose turns into  
A purple clarinet. To his left is a  
Man with a blue head, a green body,  
Legs that turn into a music stand  
And an arm curving into a French Horn.  
In the picture is a blue man,  
A yellow man, a green man.  
A purple man, and an orange man.  
They are mixed together, and their  
Instruments grow out of them.  
You look at the picture,  
And your eyes focus;  
Awake now, savage and primitive;  
You scream,  
I do not understand.

. . SAM THUMB IN THE MANHOLE  
PRYING UP ON WINDY DAYS”  
(DYLAN THOMAS)

Terry B. Taylor

The metal is potential  
grates noiselessly echoing in sewers  
where rubbish lives  
among cigarettes in soggy darkness.  
He lives on lecher's dreams  
of rayon, lace, and black garter belts;  
Marlin Perkins and *castor canadensis*.  
the man lifts iron eyelids on the sly;  
sits alone rubbishing his hands  
in sweaty anti-climactic anticipation  
for the sound of rushing leaves  
or a homburg that darkens the drain;  
waits for the wind's spell  
when the pavement becomes skin  
and the eyelid winks.





# Gold Bust

JOHN SCHOFFSTALL

*(A Comedy of Puissance and Impuissance)*

A Chippendale secretary had graced the Dutchman's parlor since before the first World War. It was a slim and noble piece of furniture, its lines economical, its ornament restrained, and every member of both lines of the Dutchman's family coveted it, but none more so than Great-aunt Mary Hanover, the Dutchman's maiden daughter, his major domo, and his heir apparent. The family called her Grand Mary. She was a terrible old woman, solid of figure, bright of eye, her skin curiously untarnished in her seventieth year. In the late, hot spring of 1972 she tended the Dutchman while he lay dying. When the will was read one afternoon in late May every member of the assembled families knew she would get the Chippendale, and few were less surprised than Grand Mary herself when she didn't.

"I never heard such nonsense in my life," she snorted when Lawyer Jenkins read that part. "Read it over, Tommy, you must have missed something. Benji promised me that desk and there isn't a one here that hasn't heard him."

But however often Lawyer Jenkins read the erring paragraph, and at Grand Mary's behest he read it three more times, it obstinately refused to change. All of the



Dutchman's personal furniture, Chippendale included, was to go to the other Hanovers, the Anders-Hanovers on the other side of town, the branch founded by Grand Mary's abominated sister who had married a Prussian.

When Lawyer Jenkins had pronounced this doom for the fourth time there was silence in the conference room for the space of half a second. Then the shouting began.

In the mahogany shadows on Grand Mary's side of the table a middle-aged young man named Roary was shooting pictures with a Nikkormat. As a photographer he was happy with the angry people. As a member of the family he was troubled: the stately current of expected events had in a moment been turned aside; the Dutchman's cold hand had thrown its waters into a strange bed. To Roary's eye the furious hoarde at the table seemed shades freshly killed, wandering in confusion under the fog and the darkness. He touched the shutter, and touched it again.

It was an hour before Lawyer Jenkins and his flat-faced, harassed secretary could bring the families to hear out the remainder of the will. Tempers were up. When Lawyer Jenkins announced that the Dutchman had desired his body to be burned and the ashes strewn over his nickel mines in Ontario, a young bravo of the Anders-Hanovers exclaimed, "but we've buried him already!"

"So dig the sonofabitch up!" Grand Mary retorted.

Afterwards there was busywork to be done, stock certificates for the Dutchman's foundry to be signed over, savings bonds to be checked off, personal effects to be cataloged and initialed by a dozen persons. Ordinarily such monotonous necessities relaxed Roary, satisfying him the way spring cleaning satisfies the housewife, giving him the bourgeois satisfaction of getting things properly squared away. But the tension in the room was enormous: people recoiled violently from the merest accidental touch.

By two in the afternoon the Hanovers had finished the day's business and wearily

piled into the waiting convoy of drab, expensive automobiles. At each steering wheel sat a sullen Hanover teenager, pressed into chauffeuring his elders home.

The Hanovers proper occupied a block of whitestones in what had half a century before been a fashionable section of the city. As the cars drove up children scrambled down a dozen stoops to stand on the pavement, their hands fidgeting behind their backs, but their faces severe as only children's can be.

"How wonderful!" Roary's wife whispered to him. "Look how solemn they are. They understand Death instinctively."

Roary doubted this. When he was very young Death had been to him just another of those obscure, bothersome sacraments of adulthood—Sex, Crime, and Business were others—that demanded a long face and careful tongue, and instilled a wariness of growing up.

He hesitated on the steps. The younger children, catching their parents' mood, had already broken ranks and were pelting one another with handfuls of gravel.

His wife nipped his arm. "Oh, stop them Roary, they'll hurt themselves."

"William! Carl! John! Alfred!" Roary called, picking out the ring leaders. "Lay down your arms!"

"Roary," said his wife.

"Cease and desist! In the name of the Queen!" Roary roared.

"What queen?" the eldest demanded. The others paused for the answer. Parents, seizing the opportunity, rushed in and began to herd their young inside.

"You're so silly sometimes, I can't see why they listen to you."

Roary lay on the bed in his shirt sleeves, his eyes squinting into the bright lights surrounding his wife's reflection in the vanity mirror. Her buttocks spilled over the tiny stool a yard beyond his feet, her hands flittered over the cosmetics on the table before her. She had, he reflected, gained a good deal of weight in their year and a half of

marriage. Marriage must be high-caloric. Was that the term? He had only a photographer's smattering of chemistry. No, it was 'exothermic.' Marriage was an exothermic reaction. Adultery, on the other hand, must be endothermic, heat-consuming, because adulterous women were always thin. Or were they adulterous because they were thin? He had seen photographs of Alison as a child—chasing ducks at the park, hole-digging at the beach, flashbulb-bleached at her tenth birthday party—and she had had that terrible skinniness then, years before he had slept with her, even years before she had slept with her pubescent brothers. If she had been truthful about that. Alison was a born writer, which is to say a born liar, and her past was constantly in flux. Her skinniness, he thought, was the only solid thing about her. It was her eternal part, and would live in the family bromide, 'lean as Alison', long after the girl herself was dust, long, long after Roary was.

And what will *you* leave, chum, he asked himself, with a cool objectivity that momentarily startled him. Some small jewelry, a trunk of yellowing glossies of non-ferrous hardware, a middle-aged wife . . . a bromide was a far more solid and subtle thing. More solid than the Dutchman's rolling mills, whose soul was a million snippets of paper, each saying, 'one share'. Today Lawyer Jenkins had cut apart and given into the winds of family politics that which in its lifetime had been of a unity and indivisibility that approached America's, or God's.

When the mills were spent—and Roary realized with a dull wrench that they would be spent—all that would remain of the Dutchman would be contained in the 'two smug volumes' Alison was presently writing. Alison's was the power of remaking the Dutchman into whatever amused her.

Alison? he thought. My dear, not Alison. He stretched, shook the reverie from him, and became aware that his wife was speaking, that she had in fact been speaking for some time. Her voice was agitated, and her face in the mirror was yet naked of makeup. Apparently she was coming to an end.

" . . . and this is why"—Roary heard—"you have got to get me an abortion."

Roary laughed, and his wife turned on him in innocent uncomprehending anger.

Alison's attic was four houses long, a high, bright, roomy place filled with paperbacks, couches, cats, book-cases, typewriters, old furniture, little magazines, slick magazines, Hemingways and Donald Hamiltons and a collection of *Adventure in the Orient* (a pulp) from 1926 to 1943. High pile carpet of Arabic design covered the floor, walls, and tilted ceiling. In the geometric centre of the floor a column of white enameled iron supported an antique Underwood upright, bronzed, a single strawflower rising from its ribbon guide.

Where the ceiling dipped to meet the floor it was cut by a line of bay windows looking out on Pecan Tree St. One of these bellied out at the bottom, making a cushiony window nook, and it was there that Alison spent her afternoons, curled up with a typewriter in her lap and a cat under her knees, chain-smoking menthol cigarettes, exhaling into a whining exhaust fan on the sill. Alison was seventeen that spring.

It was to this smartly appointed womb, then, that Alison repaired the afternoon the Dutchman's will was read. At four the trap slammed up and out of the darkness came a man's head: thin lips, flat ears, a great nose, fine skin, forty-odd years told gently in the thin strawberry hair that in ebbing made a naturally high forehead seem immense, even grotesque: it had the hugeness of a baby's.

Alison looked up and said, "Hi, Roary. I'll be done in a minute. Sit down, now."

Roary found a couch and began to remove his shoes and socks, letting his eyes, as they adjusted to the light, feel out the room's familiar properties. He had first seen the attic room two years before, dry, neglected, filled with cobwebbed trunks and broken furniture, the windows yellow with grime, when one's step was silenced by an inch of dust. It had been two weeks before his wedding when the despair of the badly married was first beginning to make itself known, in the form of flutterings deep in Roary's gut.

Six months later, when he finally recognized its cause, he found he had wandered to the rim of a foggy cliff his fair-weather philosophy had never warned him of, and it had taken Alison half a day and most of the night to lead him back.

But on the day of Alison's ultimate *lese majeste* he had mistaken these twinges for nothing more serious than Bridegroom's Syndrome, which he tried to doctor by seducing his wife-to-be.

But she had been unable to see what difference two weeks could make. They argued the point until a sharp knock announced Grand Mary, who flew through the door a moment later, shouting, "Get up, get off that bed you awful man, we need you to break your back for us!"

"By all means," said Roary.

"A child is coming among us, a little girl who has made those abominable Prussians look like a pack of damned idiots. Raus! Raus! Raus!" she called, "A child of mine is here at last," and she slammed the door.

Roary listened silently to the "Raus! Raus! Raus!" receding down the hall.

"And shall she judge the quick and the dead?" he said to his wife-to-be.

"What?"

"Is she pregnant?"

"Roary. It's probably Alison."

"Who?"

The door opened: an old man looked through and said, "If one of you is Roary, you'd best come, now. That's if you really do want to be married come a fortnight. Now's not the time to go stepping on Grand Mary's petticoats."

A half hour later Roary had found himself in the attic room Grand Mary had picked for Alison, carting boxes, lugging dirty old trunks to the trap, fetching washwater for the dozen other Hanover men Grand Mary had impressed. Slowly the junk disappeared,

slowly the room opened up; one by one the windows began to shed a clear white light. A pile of rolled carpets was discovered in a corner. They covered the floor and there were rolls left over. Someone pointed out to Grand Mary that the walls were unplastered, bare lath. "Carpet 'em," she growled. And the ceiling? There was no time for paint to dry: Alison was due that evening. "Carpet it!" Grand Mary organized a pillaging committee that roamed through the houses conscripting furniture and carrying it to the attic.

Night fell. Five cars drove up to the whitestone, from which silent men unloaded a girl's possessions. The sixth car brought Alison. She stepped from the car, and Grand Mary lightly grasped her shoulders. "My daughter," she said. Alison stared over the old woman's shoulders at the whitestone.

Putting her arm around her, Grand Mary led Alison to the attic. Behind them the Hanovers closed in and followed. "Why is she here?" Roary whispered to his wife-to-be. "Hush," she replied, taking his hand.

Alison had slowly walked around her new room reaching out, like a blind person, to touch, to feel this thing or that. The room glistened in the light of too many lamps. Grand Mary stood by the bed; Hanovers crept silently through the trap to stand behind her.

At length Alison came across the room to where Grand Mary stood, and put a bony arm around her waist. Can two more different things be conceived? Grand Mary tall, thick, high-bosomed, dressed in a tightly wrinkled black dress; Alison tiny, emaciated, flat-chested, in a man's white shirt and bluejean shorts. Then why had Roary such difficulty keeping them separate? unless it was their lips, their bloodless, cadaverous lips, lips grim and joyless that would command, cajole, caress, consume; for in their lips, as even the most unobservant Hanover would be forced to agree, these two persons were very much alike.

The next day he had asked around cautiously about what precisely Alison had done to

so alienate the Anders-Hanovers; the replies he got were vague. Then wedding preparations took his mind temporarily off the subject.

But on his wedding day, at the reception after the ceremony, he was all too receptive to it, receptive, in fact, to anything that might distract his attention from the matter at hand. An older man whom Roary did not recognize approached and said, pointing across the room to Alison: "Now there's the girl to steer clear of, boy."

Roary, mildly tipsy, replied, "She looks harmless enough. Kinda thin."

"Thin? Yes, she would be. She is Chichyvache, 'thin cow,' the cow that eats souls." He gestured out over the assembled wedding guests. "And there is her meat. Do you wonder that she's thin?"

"Did you marry into the family?" Roary asked politely.

"Knowing what I know? I was born here, and tried to marry out. It didn't work at all." He stopped. "But do be careful of Alison. I'm a professor of Medieval Literature, and I'm drunk, but I do know about Chichyvache. Once I was uncharitable, I'm afraid, and told her frankly that she was not Grand Mary and never would be. She took offense, I think. Two months later I climbed out of bed to find myself brilliantly caricatured all over page forty-seven of the *New Yorker*." He shuddered. "I have been unable to venture into the faculty lounge since. A terrible experience."

Alison, it emerged, was a poet, and a published one. Of her kind the ancient Irish said, "It is death to mock a poet; death to love a poet; death to be a poet." Alison died and murdered hourly, but she never died with Roary, who after he had discovered her went often to the attic, where his murderous intentions were repeatedly left unfulfilled.

Roary found Alison seated in the window nook on the white afternoon the Dutchman's will was read. She had a busy typewriter in her lap and a cat under her knees. He removed his shoes and socks and his jacket, tie, and shirt, and lay back on the couch. He recalled the day's events, and tried to fit them into some sort of comprehensible pattern; they

resisted the effort.

The typewriter's clatter ceased. Roary raised his head and found Alison looking at him. He nodded. "Is that the Dutchman's Biography you've got in the machine?"

"I told you I was going to do it, didn't I?"

"Yes. Let me see it."

Alison pulled the sheet she had finished from the typewriter, but instead of getting up, she folded it into a paper airplane which she sailed across the room to Roary.

He read: " 'He stood on the freighter's deck, the steady humble of the ship's engines working up through his body, infusing his being with an indescribable— ' Hm. 'The Statue of Liberty seemed to lift her torch only to him; the New World opened its petals to him: his was but to pluck the burning blossom.' Who's afraid of Thomas Wolfe, eh? You haven't got very far."

"I'm not doing it chronologically." She inserted a fresh sheet into the machine. "What were the Dutchman's last words?"

"His last words," Roary murmured. "The Dutchman's final statement to the world was, if memory serves me, 'Wake me up in the morning.' How's that?"

"No good."

"Well, they'll just have to do. There're the only last words he had. It's not as if he gave us a dozen lines to choose from, each more purple than the last." Privately, Roary liked 'Wake me up in the morning.' The only thing he had ever admired about the Dutchman was his light, careless gallantry towards Our Lady Fortune.

"Well, dammit," he said, irritated, "are you going to lie about it?"

"We'll have to. The Dutchman has left us no alternative. I've been unable to decide between 'Buy Xerox' and 'Damn Roosevelt.' "

"How about 'Damn the torpedoes'? Or is that too derivative?"

"Jesus, Roary, but you're on a bitch. I don't know why. Did he frame the first dollar he ever made?"



"No he didn't. He bought a bottle of the cheapest, rottenest rot-gut that ever burned out a workingman's throat and drank it."

"Was he torn asunder by a searing, gut-rending regret afterwards?"

"Are those the words the Authorized Biography will use?"

"More or less," Alison said.

"Yes, he was," said Roary. "But he couldn't frame a regret any more than he could frame an empty hooch bottle, so the first hundred thousand he made he bought the Chippendale."

"Roary, you are delightful. 'Hooch.' Did he really do that?"

"He told me."

She scribbled in the margin of her paper and then sat back. "Has Grand Mary moved the Chippendale to her own room, yet?"

"Grand Mary never got it," said Roary. "It passed to the other line this afternoon."

"No shit," said Alison. She stopped writing.

"No shit," repeated Roary, the words tasting pleasantly exotic in his forty-three year old mouth.

"That woman is going to be on the rag until she gets it back. I'd like to make kindling out of it. D'you know? I really would."

Roary said, "Let's just get the thing back. Hell, it would be cheaper just to buy her another. Lord knows, the Dutchman left us enough money."

"It's got to be that one," said Alison. "Only that one."

"Why?"

"It's a thing a man wouldn't understand."

Dinner was stormy that night. Conversation was strictly in a mercenary vein: 'Pass the butter,' 'Pass the salt,' 'Pass the peas.'

Later in the evening Roary and his wife visited Grand Mary with their problem. Roary's fears had been legitimate. "Don't bother me with things like that now," said

Grand Mary. "I have no time. A one I loved very much has struck me across the face. It's a thing a man wouldn't understand. Don't come to me with your little problems now."

"But she's impossible," Roary complained to Alison some hours later. They were in bed: Roary's wife was at the movies.

"Wait her out," counselled Alison. "Give her the time and she'll come right around."

But there was no time, the pregnancy was too far advanced; another week and a half and the abortion would be illegal. "Why couldn't you have told me sooner?" Roary shouted at his wife when she returned.

"So now it's my fault I'm pregnant," she retorted.

The story came out as slowly and painfully as a baby itself. She had not been sure she didn't want to have a child; she had not been sure she did. She had hesitated and oscillated. She had talked to pregnant friends, aborted friends, friends with children. She had thoroughly briefed herself on the fierce battle between the breasts and the bottles. She had even talked with the family minister.

Now she was tired and wanted an abortion. But it was the hesitation that intrigued Roary. "Why?" he asked her. "Why did you hesitate so long? Why couldn't you decide?" She could give no coherent answer.

He began slowly to realize that the malaise was not unique with her. The atmosphere in the house was shot through with a soggy indicisiveness. Nor yet was it only the house: a paralysis of the will had gripped the entire whitestone. Many began to talk of leaving their jobs—a thing unheard of during the Dutchman's life—but none took any action. "Bunch of damned chickens with their heads chopped off," said Grand Mary, but Roary recognized that the peculiar impotence touched her also. While the Dutchman was deciding to die Grand Mary had ruled the house as his right arm. Now the limb was severed from its body and could only flop helplessly around.

Three days after the reading of the will Roary drove across town to visit the Anders-Hanovers in an eleventh-hour attempt to repatriate the Chippendale. He had been

advised to see a Mr. John Anders, head of the house, a man with whom Roary was not acquainted. As it happened Roary found upon being shown into the great man's study that Mr. Anders was none other than the medievalist he had met at his wedding eighteen months before.

John Anders beamed. "Well! I expected somebody, but not you. You're not going to get it, you know, but nothing would please me more than to have a chat with you. Sit down, sit down."

Roary sat down. The Chippendale secretary stood just across the room, slightly away from the wall, looking taller, slimmer, more stately and aristocratic than ever. "I suppose I'm at a disadvantage, not being born a Hanover, but I don't really understand the significance of that thing— "

"Almost mystical, isn't it?"

"Well, I suggested buying another— "

"Wouldn't do at all."

"I was told that. By Alison, incidentally."

"Yes indeed, Alison. I often wonder about Alison. Have you crossed her yet?"

"Ah— I don't know. We've been sleeping together for a year and a half," Roary said.

John Anders guffawed. "That is certainly a novel way of muzzling a bitch-poetess. Did she suggest you see me?"

"As a matter of fact— "

"I thought so. You aren't out of her forest yet, Roary. The bitch is frigid, isn't she?"

Yes, she was. It was the only weakness he had found in her. He could not find its cause, and it bothered him. He said nothing.

"In the orient," said John Anders. "some centuries ago, they used to castrate the palace functionaries, to keep them docile, like geldings. But it had the opposite effect. It turned them into king-makers. The same happens to women after menopause. I wish you had known Grand Mary ten years ago. And the same thing happens to a frigid woman."

Roary laughed lifelessly. "It's a nice theory."

"Yes. Things like that used to keep me company. Now, all of a sudden, there's a lot going on. The family's all a-buzz." He told Roary of great projects in the works. A final break with the Hanovers-proper was being meditated. Three cousins were forming a light-metals jobbing corporation. Family daughters still in the cradle were being discussed in terms of the profitable marriages they might make, and family sons no older were being entered into Harvard, class of '94.

"Wonderful things, Roary," John Anders said. "The Anders have been stagnating for years. Now this. Amazing."

Roary asked him what state the Dutchman was in.

"Oh, he's been exhumed already," said Anders. "He goes to the crematory today and tomorrow to the funeral parlor to wait for internment." Internment was to be by the Anders-Hanovers; that had been in the will.

"Who's got the gruesome job?" Roary asked.

"My son, Kenneth, a fellow your age. I feel I should do it for the whole thing to be absolutely right, but I can't, it gives me the willies. I'm too damn close to the Dutchman's condition myself."

Roary looked closely at him, and for the first time saw the white hair, watery eyes, the sagging cheeks.

"Roary," his wife said to him that night, "I don't want a baby."

"Tell Grand Mary," he replied.

"Roary, if I don't get her permission soon I'm going to do it myself, with a knitting needle. *Do something.*"

When she was asleep, Roary stole up to the attic and informed Alison. Alison scraped an arm across her eyes and yawned. "So let her do it herself," she said irritably. "Maybe she'll hemorrhage and then you'll be rid of her, god knows, you've said often enough you wanted to be rid of her. Why in hell did you ever marry her in the first place?"

"We both loved penguins." It was true. It had seemed reasonable, as reasonable as anything else at the time.

Alison grasped his hair and pulled him down so that his head rested lightly on her stomach. "Roary," she said. "I do like you. I'll think of something."

Roary was in an uncomfortable position. What she offered was charity, and Roary did not like it. But it was all he had.

It was apposite, entirely apposite, Roary decided when he thought back on the whole crazy matter months later, that Alison should have been the one to devise the elegant, perfect gambit that would return the Chippendale to Grand Mary. Alison had been born forty years too late to be a hack, grinding out gorgeously romantic, flamboyantly unbelievable lighthearted sagas of love and violence for the pulps, fifty thousand words a day. Instead, she was forced into being a bitter existential poet in the seventies, a role unsuited for her. She didn't like it. Roary had seldom seen her happy.

She was happy the morning she brought him the Chippendale Plot. Her body seemed to fill out, the hunger in her empty cheeks seemed for once sated. She unfolded the plot cunningly, letting Roary savor fully before she showed him more.

Its elegance lay in its simplicity. Roary was to impersonate Kenneth Anders and by this subterfuge to obtain the Dutchman's ashes from the funeral home. He would bring them back to Pecan Tree Street, to be held for ransom.

"It will be unique in the annals of crime," Roary told the assembled family that evening. "I doubt that it's even illegal." What could they charge us with? he wondered. Petty larceny at the worst. How much could a heap of ashes be worth? He shied away from that cold thought.

He had expected an uproar. He got a shifting silence from the half a hundred present. After more than a minute, Grand Mary announced in an uncertain voice, "I don't like it. It's undignified."

"It's that or no Chippendale." His own bravado astonished him.

After a small silence she consented. Roary said, "My wife needs an abortion."

One or two people made startled sounds. Grand Mary said, "Don't bother me with that now."

"Do you want the Chippendale," said Roary, "or don't you."

Grand Mary glared at him, and he knew he would have his way.

At eight the following morning Roary was at the door of the Wellen Funeral Home when the first attendants came to unlock it. When a secretary arrived he told her what he wanted. She nodded. Rummaging about in a closet for a moment, she emerged finally with Roary's great-grandfather-in-law in a pasteboard box, setting afloat on the mahogany splendor of the desk top.

"Are you Nick Anders, great-grandson of the deceased," she asked mournfully.

*Nick.* Roary decided it must be a nickname. "Sure am," he replied, lying like a man.

"Then sign here, please."

'Ken (Nick) Anders' Roary signed, knowing the forgery was bad, knowing it would last until the ashes were safe. "Good day," he said, and, tucking the Dutchman under his arm, walked out of the building into the midday glare of the Wellen Funeral Home parking lot.

His VW had been parked in the sun and the heat inside was stifling. Roary dropped his grandfather onto the seat beside him and hurriedly opened all the windows. He pulled off his jacket and tossed it over the seat.

He lit a cigarette with some difficulty—the matches were damp with his sweat—and when it was going he took a drag and glanced at the box.

Smaller than a breadbox, it was. He guessed about five by five by eight. Plain manila pasteboard with 'Hanover' scribbled on the top in ball pen. A crack ran around the middle.

He reached over and lifted off the top. Inside was a metal can. Using both hands, he upended the bottom half of the box and the can came sliding out onto the seat with a hiss and a muffled thump, making a considerable indentation where it lay on the vinyl. He reached to right it, his hands moving over the yellow metal cautiously, as though he feared contamination.

He grunted. His leverage was bad and the thing was heavy, quite heavy, which had surprised him when he had first picked it up. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. How heavy were ashes? or dust? But this thing weighed fifteen pounds if a gram.

And he had expected something taller, more slender . . . something like a brass amphora. Instead, he had been handed this thing, a two-quart paint tin without the label. It even had a paint tin's top, the sort to be pried off with a screwdriver.

He pulled it over to him, lifting it, turning it in his hands. Inside something hissed against the metal wall, like fine gravel, or very coarse sand. 'Cremaines,' the funeral home called them. What were they, he wondered. What of a man survives the fire? His noblest part? The heavy metals, probably, mostly the calcium from his bones and teeth, the magnesium from the chlorophyll in his dinner stringbeans, the mercury from all the tunas on rye with lettuce hold the mayo. The strontium 90 from his milk. All the light stuff, the hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, all that was lost, born off by the sexton winds.

Roary felt no fear, and that was curious, here, looking directly into the dark and tumultuous core of the maelstrom. He rolled the can in his hands, listening to the purr of the ashes as they fell across the tin. For forty-three years he had remained skeptical of what people called mutability. Now he held the grindings of its mills in his hands.

He looked back and touched his life. It was as cold, as shining, as protean as silver. He had disbelieved in change, and his life had been changed for him, his education, his marriage, his job, his adultery, all had been plotted by others. In his own biography, Roary was nowhere to be found.

Where was the fear in this boggy, mutability? It mattered not what Roary did with himself, some year forward another boy would be curiously turning over Roary in his

hands as Roary turned his grandfather now. He was struck by the softness of the world.

Whistling softly Roary returned the can to its box. He walked back inside the funeral home. The secretary he had spoken with was still at her desk.

“Miss?”

She looked up. “Yes? May I help you?”

“I was just admiring the urns you use.”

“Oh, yes.” She cracked a smile. “The porcelains are very nice.”

“I was referring to the metal tins. I was wondering whether you had any you might care to sell.”

The woman stared at him. “Let me see,” she said. She walked from the room, to reappear a moment later with a chubby man in a dark suit. “May I ask, sir,” he said, “what, ah, use you intend to make of these . . . cans?”

“As planters.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I think they’d by dandy things to plant flowers in.”

The woman walked quickly away. The man said, “You are one of our clients?” Roary assured him that he was. “It’s not a common request . . . but I’ll see what I can do. I assume you wouldn’t be wanting the boxes.”

“But I very much do want the boxes.”

“Well. One minute, please.” He left, and five minutes later re-entered the room followed by a young disreputable-looking man in white overalls smudged with soot. The young man carried a dozen of the boxed tins.

“I only want two,” Roary said. “You see, I only have an apartment, and there’s not much room.”

He picked out two and reached for his wallet, but the pudgy man waved his arms. “For only two there’s no charge. Nothing is too good for the client.”



“But the cost,” Roary demurred.

“Oh, well, they’re really quite cheap— ” He stopped. Roary laughed in his face and walked out.

He looked at his watch and was surprised to find it was only eight-thirty. He killed the rest of the day in movie theatres, the library, and the city’s museum and art gallery.

When he drove home it was after ten in the evening. He drove down the block slowly. Every light was on. Parking a block away, he approached the whitestone from the alley behind, coming in across the back lawn and going directly down to the cellar. Here was his photography lab. He turned on only the ruby safelight and placed the three tins on the counter below it. The two empties he filled with sodium sulfite and poured the Dutchman into the now empty jar. Then he lit a cigarette and set about printing the new rolls of negatives he had taken at the Dutchman’s will reading.

When everything was quiet above Roary gathered the three boxed tins up in his arms and silently went up through the dark sleeping house to his bedroom. It was empty. His wife had wasted no time in being admitted to a hospital. Roary placed a full tin under the bed and the other two in the closet. Then he got into bed and closed his eyes.

He had waited only half an hour before the door opened and a skinny figure in a nightgown entered and padded about the room, looking into the corners, lifting his clothes from the floor. Finally finding the tin under the bed she left the room with it. For some minutes Roary hurt violently. Then he reminded himself that he had anticipated what had happened, and the hurt eased a little. He took the other filled tin from the closet and placed it where the first had been.

Two hours later a man entered the moonlit room. He found the tin under the bed after only a few seconds. When he closed the door Roary jumped up. In the moonlight he had seen the figure to have white hair, watery eyes, and sagging cheeks. It was something

he had not anticipated. And it had definitely been a man. He thought a moment, then went downstairs and filled the remaining tin with hypo crystals. He placed it where the first two had been and, climbing between the sheets, finally let himself fall asleep.

He awoke at seven the next morning. An obscure nephew was shaking his arm. "Roary, Roary," he stuttered, "You better get downstairs now. Everyone's waiting for you." I'll bet, thought Roary. When the boy left he checked under his bed. The third tin was gone.

All the family was up and in the living room when he arrived. There were Alison and Grand Mary, looking strangely alike in their bathrobes, the family massed behind them. In front of each was an open funereal urn of white crystals.

"Now," said Roary seating himself in a chair,

"Now," said Roary, and all present touched their foreheads to the carpet,

"Now," said Roary, and the mountain came unto him,

"Now," said Roary, easing himself back and lighting a cigarette, "let's talk business."

## CHIAROSCURO

Donna Munns

Like the night  
I guard my secret well.  
! know that I am deadly;  
That strange beasts  
Lurk within confines  
And that Cerebus sits baleful at my gates.

And then there is your face  
Hovering above me like a sun,  
Breaking upon darkness,  
Giving light.

You who would deny your strength  
Seem perfectly poised against my own,  
Not like opponents in a tug-of-war,  
We are, instead, a finely trained,  
Feather-sensitive balancing act;  
The strength of each holding the other  
In delicate, elegant suspension  
Many feet above the sawdust floor.

## FOUR SELF PORTRAITS

B. Rudisill

J. A. Howard

R. Tillotson

S. Norgard

## PROLOGUE

After the four had spent three years in the monastery, hewing wood and drawing water, they were summoned together to the master's quarters. They found the master abed, white jowled, dull-eyed, victim to an especially enervating strain of weltschmerz. "What," he asked them, "is the color of the night?"

Geoffrey Sansfoi listened to his friends reply:

"Black."

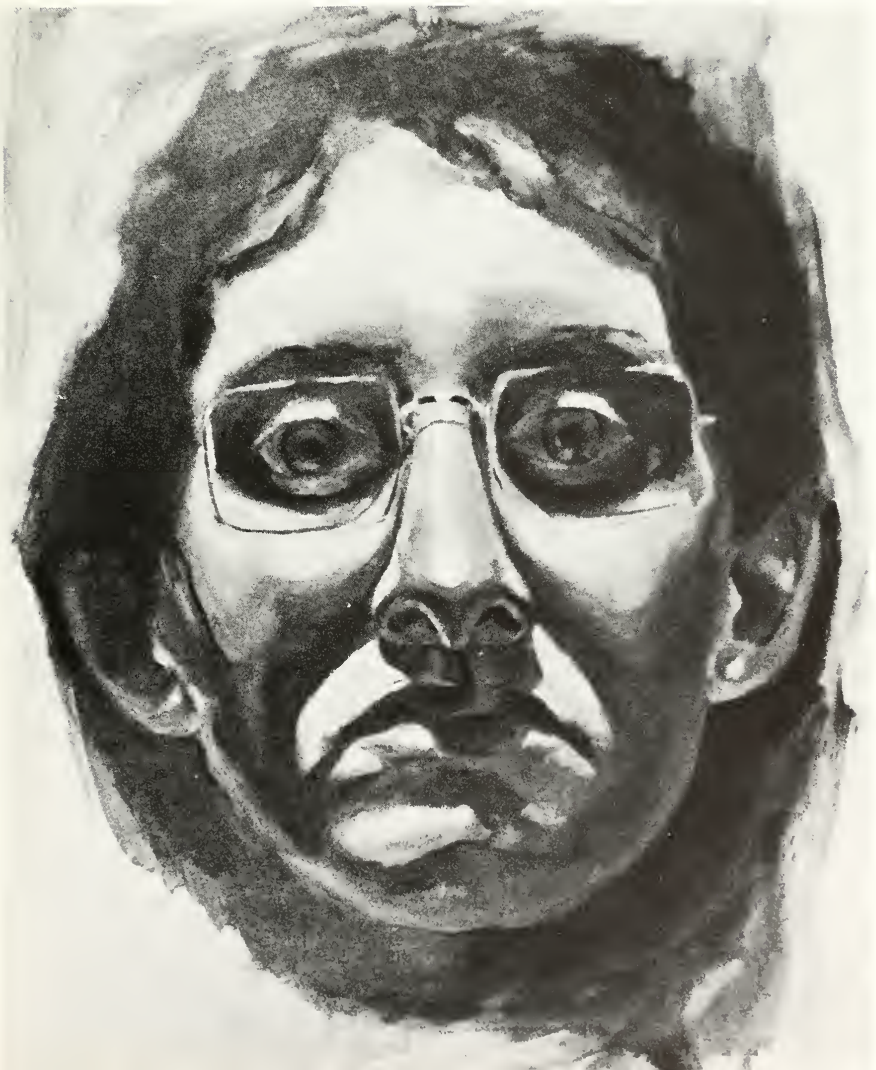
"It has no color."

"It is the color of the crane's sleep, the shade of the she-tiger's hunting lust."

"No." and "You beg the question." and "Too purple," sighed the master.

But when he asked Geoffrey, the boy merely shrugged, saying, "Who can know? It is too damn dark to tell."

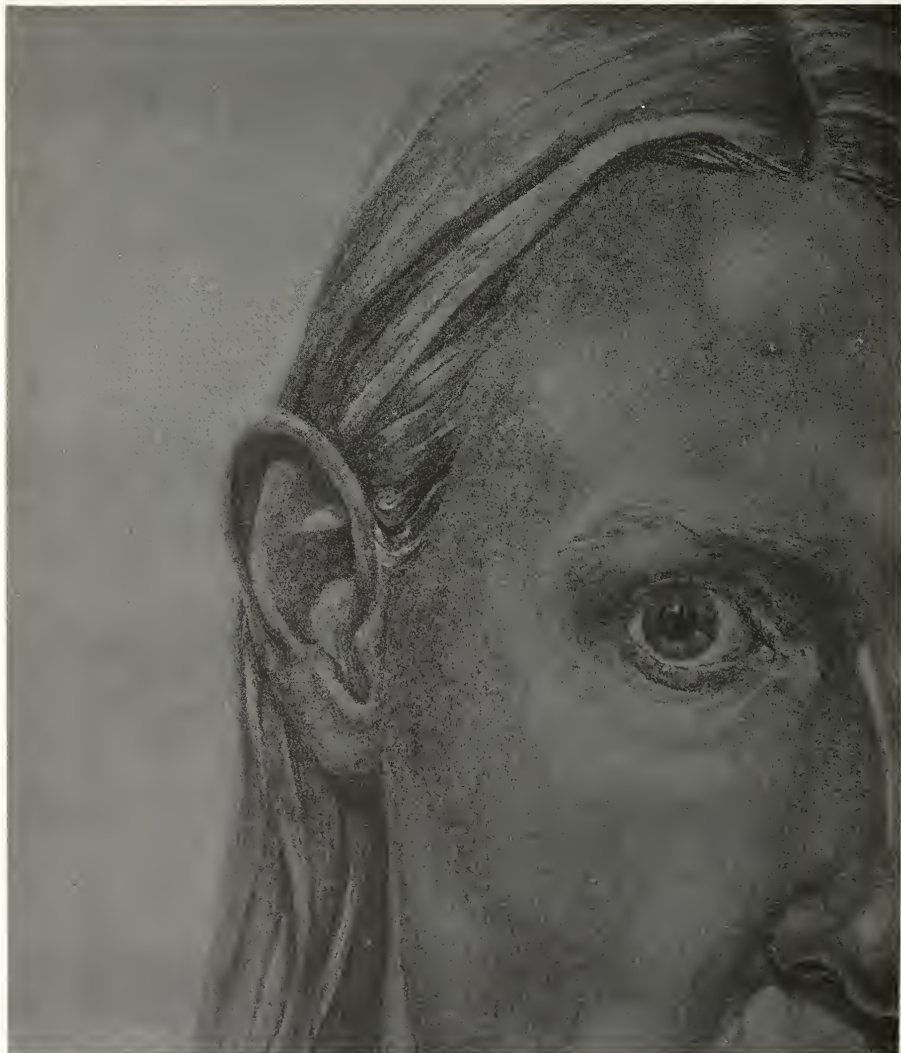
Aethelstan Colgate













## AT INTERVALS

Ann Deagon

The sun half risen and the moon half set  
I open my slit eyes into a daylight  
my life a nightmare followed by a wet dream  
and hard to wake from either.

For I have not been sure and am not sure  
whether I would choose to be your sun  
and fire you to your orbit or to be  
your moon and round you like a tongue  
or neither, plummeting the light-years  
to kindle in the solar wind my hair  
a flame you cannot put me out you beat  
hands against my blazing skin they sear  
your kisses sizzle at my mouth your seed  
mounts backward like a Yogi's to the brain  
I hurl beyond you fiery into dark  
fading across twilight to cold space  
where poems make.

## PENELOPE AFLOAT

Ann Deagon

I

Thirty, forty years on clay flats:  
night rain slicks ground, noon  
matte-finishes it, afternoon  
crackles surface to same patterns. I  
notice my toes are spreading out, something  
filmy between, resilient, toughening  
(under the microscope capillaries  
pulse, pollulate). I do not admit.  
I cram them into wider shoes, stumble,  
flap arms to balance. My fingers  
ruffle in air. I moult and mottle,  
greyer brown, splotted with wild sileen.  
Somewhere there must be a pond.

II

Walking into water, webs  
 come into their own, invent  
 roads from under. My nest rounds  
 with eggs. (Before, I broke each  
 day's egg in the pan, each egg's  
 spot of blood accused me like  
 an eye.) Here in slow green I  
 feed relentlessly, strain poems  
 from water thicker than blood,  
 burst my secret oil-duct, preen  
 my ruff to silver.

III

You umber turtle,  
 always below me,  
 flat, two-dimensioned,  
 of no thrust in air;  
 whose bite is blooded  
 with no death but mine—  
 your base element  
 invites my green mind.  
 Snag my foot, proclaim  
 the mud journey.

## SMALL POND

Ann Deagon

My big body,  
womans its way  
across campus:  
my thighs marry  
my hips divorce  
my arms swing  
my belly bags  
with eggs.

Watch me,  
you tadpole girls.  
Someday you'll be  
big frogs all.



## DIRGE

Ann Deagon

I am burying you  
one more time  
for all the good it will do  
with your photographs your letters  
and the dried stalks of  
wildflowers the poems  
pencilled against your belly  
in the afternoons  
of long grass  
I am putting you out of my mind  
I am turning you under  
for all the good it will do

There is no quicklime  
for memory

## MATCH

Ann Deagon

Wrestler, when I dream  
the grip we grope for  
that fine close grip of fingers  
onto life,  
when feint and parry  
falter and we fall  
mouth into mouth—  
I wake to wondering  
what hold you have on me  
on what strange footing  
we pit our weaknesses  
and try our falls.

Wrestler, clasp me lightly  
while I dream  
lie down to you like nightfall  
on the mountains  
and rise from you like morning.

## WHEN SHE HAS HER WAY

Tim Tarkington

She would have her way;  
make herself something of a joke,  
a clown affecting a pretense  
of pain or pleasure before a mirror  
playing one off the other  
to make a mockery of everything.

But I, who trace  
within the circus of my face  
cat man caged among hungry lions  
and trapeze artist above thread-bare net,  
put on the pretense of life and death  
within the carnival of my heart

where the carousel whirls  
to the music of cymbals and drums;  
and I, who face the joking mirror, once again  
begin to ride the nightmare of her blood.



## EUROPE IN TWENTY—ONE DAYS OR LESS

Patti Smith

Sandwiched by the modern towers

I

Shuffle through the scrimmage of scurrying blue suits

For punctual deliverance to Flight 999 boarding at gate five.

Number one is checked off

With no record in my diary.

As the sun comes up behind the big clock

We synchronize our schedules;

Bruised by the crowding out of my pictures

I catch the music of the marching men in red and black.

The tune lingers as I cruise down the next main street

Hoping in silence that our driver sees the stoplight

Hanging over the water.

Earth under my feet again

On my left I see the tower,

Forgetting the direction of its slant

Since it is behind me now.

Looking on the right, the remaining ruins

And on my left again I see— now where is it that the Pope stands?

We've passed it.



But I need this time to find some coins for the fountain.  
Again, using unused time to buy a replica of the statue;  
The line was so long  
I lost my allotment for staring at the stone.  
Declining dinner with the villagers, I detest,  
But I must be rested for the bullfight tomorrow.  
A quick cleck with the itinerary  
Confirms that the trees are as required  
And  
Looking back at the arch  
I suspect our participation in the traffic jam.  
Camera ready— on the right - that famed steel structure.  
Remember not to use a flash,  
The reflection against the glass causes a glare.

Twenty-one checks later  
I  
Award my diplomatic  
Maze of memories  
To the most deserving ear.

## FULL MOON

Terry B. Taylor

I

The moon is a lecher's eye.

Sly on the horizon,  
winks with lust at virgins  
asexually.

Unfiltered beams strip the trees  
birches—icen sculptures—  
razoring the sky stubbleless  
smooth pre-pubic skin  
and dormant chests.

II

Hair grows with claw,  
as antique spells fulfill themselves.  
The man/animal lurks  
creep hiding in the scrub  
waiting for virgins  
fetching, young virgins  
lecherously like the moon.  
spells of age-old instincts  
rise with the moon.  
tides swell, he inflates, and strikes.

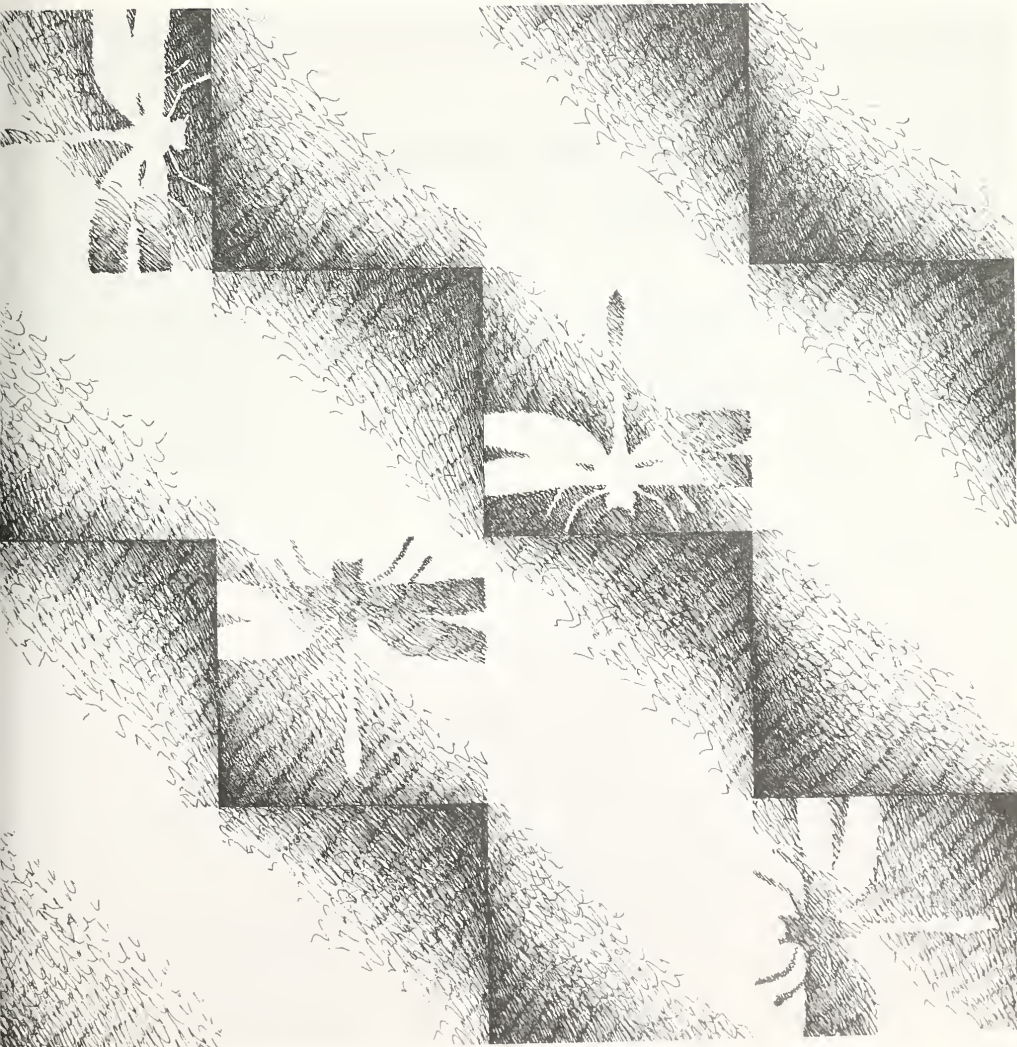
## DARKLING AT BATTLE'S EDGE

W. T. Wimbish

death came,  
    virtuous in voracity,  
    pious in putrifaction,  
    dreadnought dragonfly death.

it came,  
    searing 'twixt stone towers,  
    gibbering obscene benediction,  
    raking tined talons in the sea of ashen eyes,  
    sockets pooled 'round in read.

death,  
    stealing bounty and its ration of souls,  
    shrieking to its nest, returning then  
    to its aerie o're the smouldering shores of the styx.  
    . . . and the wind in its wake rustled  
    cloaks of the humble; rustled  
    the banners of noble houses,  
alike.



## DOUBLE O'S GENERAL STORE

### Ruby Rufty

Hoarhound candy was a penny a stick.  
Old feet on the cheese-waxed floor,  
Like flies on sticky paper,  
Warm by the stove.  
Skinny men in high-back overalls  
'Member jokes and old times  
When groceries were delivered  
By that crazy mule  
That would kick  
When he didn't want to go.  
The girl stands eager to fetch and poke  
Yardgoods, fatback, hog serum, almanac,  
Half-runner bean seed, onion-at-a-time.

Nose against the candy counter,  
A child yanks his mother's skirt.  
The old man places a sucker  
In the baby hand  
And pats the head.  
Tell the man "thank you."  
He pops the sweet in his mouth,  
Soon to be covered with sticky red.  
The old man smiles.



## contributors

L. Beebe is a sophomore from Fayetteville.

D. Bell is a junior from McLean, Va., who will not play a no-trump contract.

E.R. Berry is a plaid-shirted MFA student from Ashland, Va.

P. Braxton is a *Pine Needles* associate editor and Publications gopher.

L. Bryan spells *Coraddi* with two r's.

M. Byerly comes through once again.

D. Carter is a freshman from Jamestown.

A. Colgate was born in Egypt, the son of Foreign Service parents. He narrowly escaped death at the hands of a Coptic midwife, who thought Aethelstan's bright orange pupils the sign of the Anti-Christ.

A. Deagon is a classics professor at Guilford College. She has won numerous awards for her poetry.

J. Gastor is a member of the *Cary* staff.

B. Gerhart is an instructor on the art faculty at UNC-G.

J.A. Howard is an MFA student in art from Nashville, Tenn.

B. Hunt is the Photography Editor of the *Cary*. He spends his days hanging around in darkrooms and other evil places.

- A. Katz is the "best female poet in the MFA program."
- T. Kerr is a pleasant, blonde, poet-child.
- C. Magid is a senior art major weaving her way to stardom.
- D. Munns is from Chapel Hill.
- S. Norgard is a cute, blonde bombshell who buys Chunkies® when she is depressed.
- J. Ridl is a professor from Hope College.
- B. Rudisill is a senior art major from Thomasville.
- R. Rufty checks IDs in the cafeteria and writes.
- J. Schoffstall is *Cary* copyeditor, grammatical nit-picker, and Bastard-in-Chief.
- P. Smith is a senior from Bethesda, Md.
- T. Tarkington is an MFA candidate and rabid bridge player.
- T.B. Taylor is preparing to mold young minds next fall.
- R. Tillotson is preparing his MFA thesis show for the spring.
- S. Van Noppen (Anderson) is an MFA candidate in fiction.
- R. Watson is a senior art major from Greensboro.
- W.T. Wimbish is an artist and witer for a comic book collective in Chicago.
- A. Witzky is a Conneticut Yankee.



